

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Holt, Kim and Kelly, Nancy (2020) Care in crisis—Is there a solution? Reflections on the Care Crisis Review 2018. *Child & Family Social Work*, 25 (1). pp. 1-7. ISSN 1356-7500

Published by: Wiley-Blackwell

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12644> <<https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12644>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/39010/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria
University**
NEWCASTLE



UniversityLibrary

Care in crisis—Is there a solution?

Reflections on the Care Crisis Review 2018

Kim Holt Nancy Kelly

Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, University of Northumbria, Newcastle upon Tyne, UK

Correspondence

Kim Holt, Department of Social Work, Education and Community Wellbeing, University of Northumbria, Coach Lane Campus, Newcastle upon Tyne NE7 7XA, UK. Email: kim.holt@northumbria.ac.uk

Abstract

In 2017, the number of applications for care orders in England and Wales was the highest ever recorded at 14,207. This is a significant factor, contributing to the rise in the number of children who are looked after, which is at the highest level since 1985.

The authors reflect on the recently published Care Crisis Review 2018, a sector-led review, which examines the reasons for the rise in care proceedings and the number of children in care. The review sought to identify changes to policy and practice within local authorities and the family justice system, in an attempt to divert cases away from the family courts and to reduce the number of children in care, where it is safe to do so.

Whilst the legislative framework is largely effective and the system generally works well, there is insufficient funding and resources to meet the needs of children and their families when they seek help, regardless of whether this is at an early stage or when they are in crisis and most in need of care and protection.

KEYWORDS

care crisis, care orders, children in care, relationship working

1 | INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In his 15th View from the President's Chambers: Care cases: The looming crisis, Sir James Munby stated, "we are facing a crisis and, truth be told, we have no very clear strategy for meeting the crisis" (2016). The Care Crisis Review (2018) was a response to that challenge and the review puts forward 20 options for change, ranging from immediate operational changes for workers engaging in direct work with families, to wider structural, financial, and systemic imperatives. The aim of this paper is to first report and examine the rising numbers of care applications and children looked after in England and second, to consider some of the key messages and options/opportunities proposed by the Care Crisis Review, both in relation to actions prior to formal state intervention and throughout the duration of care proceedings. In our final considerations, we comment on the welcome contribution of the Care Crisis Review in respect of changes that may contribute to an improved system for children and their families, but we are forthright in highlighting the overarching need for increased resources for children's services, not simply a redistribution of the current financial allocations.

1.1 | The increasing number of care applications and looked after children in England

Available national statistics in relation to the number of care applications (Cafcass Statistics, 2018) reports a consistent rise between the years 2014 and 2015 to 2016 and 2017, the number of applications at 11,159, 12,792, 14,599, respectively. In 2017 and 2018, the numbers fell by approximately 2.7% on the previous year and stood at 14,207. The number of care applications for the year 2007 and 2008 stood at 6,241 representing an increase in 10 years of 127%. Available national rates of application per 10,000 (Cafcass Statistics, 2018), which allow for identification of trends independent of population growth, not surprisingly increase over a similar time period, with a rate of 8 in 2008 and 2009, rising between 2013 and 2014 to 2016 and 2017 from 9.2, 9.7, 11, and 12.5, respectively.

When statistics are broken down by local authority, of which 151 are reported (Cafcass Statistics, 2018), the rates of application vary, and there is variation in local authorities that have reported relatively stable rates over the period 2013–2017 and those where rates have fluctuated. By 2016 and 2017, two local authorities had rates of applications at the lowest possible, 0, and the highest rate reported was 40.6%.

Reported statistics (Department for Education, 2017) in relation to numbers and rates of looked after children in England, per 10,000, demonstrates similar patterns with the number of looked after children in 2013 standing at 68,070 and in 2017, 72,670, with 90 children entering care each day. Between 2013 and 2016, the rate of children looked after stood at 60, with an increase to 62 in 2017. Again, there is regional variability of the 10 regions in England; the range of rate of looked after children varied between 45 and 92 per 10,000, with four regions having rates higher than the national average. Two regions seem significantly higher than others, the North East at a rate of 92, and the North West at a rate of 86. An examination of the rates of looked after children in the North East in 2017 demonstrates variation across the 12 local authorities with the lowest rate of 69 and the highest rate of 137. In the North West, the lowest reported rate is 57, and the highest is 184.

Whilst caution must be exercised with regard to taking statistics at face value, it is clear that the number of care applications and number of children accommodated in alternative care have risen consistently over, at the very least as reported above, 5 years; there is variation across and within regions in England.

1.2 | Contributory factors to the care crisis

Drawing upon significant research and commentary, for example, Bunting et al. (2018), Davidson, Bunting, Bywaters, Featherstone, and McCartan (2017), McGhee et al. (2018), Bywaters et al. (2018), Featherstone, White, and Morris (2014), Care Crisis Review (2018), identifies complex and overlapping factors that are contributing to the increasing numbers of care applications and looked after children. These factors include socio-economic factors, legal and policy frameworks, professional practice, the nature of children and family circumstances, and tensions within the system. The review highlights that there is "little evidence to evaluate the relative impact of these individual factors and their effect over time, or of the impact of different combinations of factors" (Care Crisis Review, 2018, p. 15). Nonetheless, poverty (recent predictions suggest that there will be 5 million children living in poverty in 2020) and austerity measures; positioning early help and children in need services as a precursor to child protection rather than a statutory duty to provide a range of services (Working Together to Safeguard Children, 2018); differential regional use of legal orders; experience of families and practitioners working together and within systems as problematic; changing nature profiles of children and families seeking help (notably older children, children of different ethnicity, cases involving domestic violence, cases involving parental learning difficulties, cases of repeat care proceedings with women), and a mistrust between families, professionals, policy makers and the legislative system are clearly pivotal in understanding the care statistics and in developing systems to address the care crisis.

In concordance with Sir James Munby (2016), the authors acknowledge that the factors contributing to the care crisis may indeed be multiple drivers that produce a cumulative impact; however, questioning the President's 15th View, we argue that there may be key drivers with high impact, notably financial factors across the whole system. The Care Crisis Review has taken place over a time of changes to all areas of the family justice system: There have been changes in innovative practice with families, in research and data collection to provide evidence based measures and impact of approaches working with families, in legislation and practice guidance, and at governmental level a review of service cuts on the ability and capacity of local authorities to respond to the needs of families.

What follows is an outline of some of the key messages outlined by the Care Crisis Review and a commentary on some of the options for change.

1.3 | Changes in innovative practice—partnership and relational working with families

Underpinning the whole of the review is a key message that partnership and relational working with families is at the core of effective practice. The review highlights a number of case studies where local authorities adopted whole system relational approaches that reduced the number of children on child protection plans or in care or in care proceedings. These case studies were part of a larger number of projects and evaluations supported by the Department for Education Children's Social Care Innovation Programme. The first reported was Hertfordshire Family Safeguarding (Forrester et al., 2017), Leeds Family Valued (Mason, Ferguson, Morris, Munton, & Sen, 2017), North East Lincolnshire: Creating Strong Communities (Rodger, Woolger, Cutmore, & Wilkinson, 2017), and No Wrong Door—an example of good practice with adolescents (Lushey, Hyde Dryden, Holmes, & Blackmore, 2017; across North Yorkshire). Each demonstrated multidisciplinary working and clear commitment to strengths based approaches to working with families moving away from what had arguably become default deficit approaches.

Each of these case studies and evaluations provide demonstrable benefits of partnership working for families, professionals, agencies, and the legislative system, yet they also continue to highlight the need for change in cultural shift if such innovations are to be sustainable. Whilst many professionals and families working together acknowledged positive outcomes, there were often levels of cynicism, in the first instance of the ambition of the programmes, the resources and training needed to deliver programmes, and the sustainability of intensive multidisciplinary interventions.

In addition, other programmes specifically highlighted in the review and referred to as essential in the future of improving

outcomes for children and parents in the 15th View from the President's Chambers, include the Family Drug and Alcohol Court (FDAC) and Pause. FDAC was initiated in 2008 as the London FDAC and operated across six London boroughs. This was an innovative approach within the legal system whereby alternative forms of care proceedings could be initiated where substance misuse by parents was a key factor in decision making. FDAC introduced a process whereby there was judicial continuity, a problem solving therapeutic approach, and specialist multidisciplinary teams working with the courts. These teams carried out assessments, worked in relational ways with families, provided support to enable and assist parents to engage with substance misuse programmes and to sustain those activities/outcomes. They were also tasked with addressing other parenting needs, and a court review process was held fortnightly to allow judges to engage directly with parents and social workers. Initial evaluation of FDAC (Harwin, 2014) and subsequently Harwin et al. (2018), Roberts, Crowther, Brown, and Kerr (2017) all provide evidence that a sustained high-intensity intervention at this whole systemic level had positive outcomes for many children and families, with more FDAC mothers not misusing substances than comparators and more FDAC mothers being reunited with their children at the end of proceedings. Since the inception of FDAC and taking heed of the initial lessons learned, a FDAC National Unit has been created to oversee the implementation of new FDACs.

Pause is a programme continuing to develop from an initial pilot in one local authority in 2013 to address issues of repeat removals of children from women. There is increasing evidence surrounding the number of young women who experience a range of complex vulnerabilities who are subject to rapid and repeat removals of children into care (Broadhurst et al., 2016; Harwin et al., 2014). Pause offers a multidisciplinary approach to therapeutic, practical, and behavioural change for women that are designed to reflect individual needs within women's own life contexts. Unlike other innovative approaches Pause is a nonstatutory, voluntary programme independent from social care services. An evaluation of Pause (McCracken et al., 2017) suggests that most women participating in the programme reduced substance misuse, demonstrated improved mental health, improved consistent and quality contact with their children, improved housing situations, improved engagement with some level of vocational/educational training, and accessed significantly more support services than prior to the programmes.

Under section 3.11 p. 24 in the Care Crisis Review, the option for change in relation to "Good systems and practice" outlines that "social care leaders and partner agencies regularly review their organizations systems and practice against the messages from research about a) effective interventions and relationship based practice and b) agency vision." There are clear examples in the Care Crisis Review, and elsewhere, where some progress is being made with regard to approaches that go back to the heart of social work values and practice, that is, whole systems approaches and relational working with families. However, it is

not clear how widespread this is nor how some of the conceptual and professional barriers to such working may be overcome. For example, there are issues in relation to definitions of partnership working and the concept of partnership in social work interventions at different levels (Ruch, 2005, 2010) and issues in practice with the increasing bureaucratisation of social work. Sir James Munby expressed concern in his 15th View that "FDAC and Pause, both of them, for they are complementary- must be nurtured and supported. The FDAC National Unit plays a vital role as midwife and health visitor to new FDACs as they prepare and then implement their plans. Without the FDAC unit the continuing roll out of new FDACs is likely to falter. We cannot, we must not allow this to happen."

As we have argued elsewhere (Holt & Kelly, 2018), partnership working with families is complex and the practice of engaging with families at different stages of need, from those where children are "in need" and early help/family support may be appropriate, to those where children are "at risk of significant harm," is challenging. In part as a response to the public inquiry into the death of Victoria Climbié (Laming Report, 2003) in England, Every Child Matters: Change for Children (Department for Education and Skills, 2004) brought about significant developments in safeguarding children whereby the focus was broadened out from cases where the focus was on the risk of significant harm, to a position where improvements in outcomes for all children were to be maximized. This shift to a duty by the state to safeguard the welfare of all children might have led the way to considerably more opportunities for relational work with families whereby earlier interventions prevented situations escalating to a chronic level and alleviated problems such as poor educational attainment, antisocial behaviour and crime (Parton & Williams, 2017). However, the death of Peter Connelly (Baby P) in 2007 resulted in widespread opprobrium about child protection systems and practice and in effect saw a move back to a narrow form of child protection concentrating on prescribed risk assessment, with associated rises in referrals to children's social care, 47 inquiries, applications for care orders and the numbers of children taken into care.

Despite further calls for a return to practice where early help and professional expertise is at the centre of child safeguarding (Munro, 2010, 2011a, 2011b), changes in the political system in the United Kingdom resulted in cuts to resources in children's services and a move to an "authoritarian neo-liberal state" (Parton, 2014). By 2013, the coalition government had moved firmly to a position where early intervention with families was not about early help and support to keep families together but about the intention of removing more children into care, a clear reversal of the intention of Every Child Matters. Measures were taken that highlighted the need for faster child protection procedures and faster processes leading to the increased use of adoption. Since that time, and to date, in a culture where children are to be "rescued" from parents whose lifestyles and parenting skills are deemed highly inappropriate, it is difficult to see how relationship based practice can be enacted on the scale the care crisis review envisions.

1.4 | Research and data collection to provide evidence-based measures and impact of approaches working with families

In order for a relationship-based practice option for change to be implemented, there must be rigorous, transparent, and accessible data available from all stakeholders in the family justice system. The review reports several developments in this area including the Nuffield Family Justice Observatory and the Ministry of Justice data set PLATO.

One of the significant changes in research and evaluation over the last decade, in particular with the evaluations funded by the Children's Social Care Innovation Programme reported in the review and in the academic Research Excellence Framework has been the reporting of impact. Impact can be demonstrated at many levels and by many stakeholders, including quantitative and qualitative measure of experiences and outcomes. In section 6 of the review, "Research matters," a key message is the need to respond to gaps in knowledge and understanding and learning from those with experience of the system.

Under section 6.22 p. 50 options, the review proposes an option for change that states:

"Research matters. That there is a presumption that the methodology of research studies exploring practice with, and outcomes for, children and families incorporates the experiences of family members...that research funders and research centres are briefed about the gaps in knowledge that have been identified in the care crisis review."

This cannot be in dispute, yet the option in its generality cannot address the dominant positivist research paradigm where funders are seeking evidence of experiences and interventions in the form of quantitative measures over large sample sizes with comparator groups. As the review comments "The point was made that listening to the direct experience of individual families helps us learn how difficulties build up or change over time. Researchers (as well as practitioners) who take this approach end up with family accounts that are more nuanced and complex than those often represented by commentators, or by researchers who rely entirely on case file information or snapshots of people's life at a single moment of great stress" (section 6.20 p. 48, our emphasis). Paradoxically, qualitative approaches to researching practice, which are underpinned by values of relational ways of working and understanding, are less likely to gain funding, a clear financial disadvantage, and less likely to be reported than either quantitative approaches or mixed methods approaches.

A positive aspect of the quantitative recording of impact is in the estimated financial implications of interventions. In section 6.19, the Care Crisis Review option for change calls for the Government to make up the £2 billion shortfall predicted for children's social care by 2020. Further, it calls for a government ring-fenced funding stream to local authorities to help safely averting children entering or remaining in the care system and to work with parents, including post proceedings to tackle some of the issues of repeat removal of children (p. 48).

In the innovative working examples cited earlier, Forrester et al.(2017) reported an estimated saving to children's services by a reduction in care and child protection allocations of £2.6 million in the first 12 months. This project is continuing in Hertfordshire and rolling out to a further four local authorities. Mason et al. (2017) reported savings of approximately £574,000 as a result of families (n = 760) engaging with Family Group Conferences and spending less time within the social care system. In Leeds, the Family Group Conference has been expanded. Rodger et al. (2017) report in several areas of cost benefit, but the use of family group conferencing alone was reported at a total estimated benefit in 1 year of £1,729,651. Plans were in place for this approach to continue in the authority. Lushey et al. (2017) report several areas of cost benefit, again with several parts of the whole system reducing costs due to the programme. For instance, the police costs reduced by an estimated £200,000 due to less arrests and missing from home incidents; the use of residential placements reduced significantly, and the greater stability of placements resulted in a saving of approximately £45,000.

The initial FDAC evaluation (Harwin et al., 2014) estimated that the costs of running the programmes by 2014 were approximately £12,000 per family, and whilst there was no detail in the initial report, the financial benefits were seen in reduced use of experts in court, shorter and/or fewer hearings with lawyers present and in the costs of foster placements during proceedings and reunification procedures with families at the end of proceedings. FDAC was rolled out in a small number of other authorities, and an FDAC National Unit was established in 2015, funded by the Department for Education Children's Social Care Innovation Programme, resulting in the support of nine sites operating the programme working in 12 courts for 17 local authorities.

The evaluation of Pause (McCracken et al., 2017) reports that without this intervention in supporting 125 women, the likelihood would have been between 21 and 36 pregnancies with the very high probability of the children being taken into care at the cost of at least £1.2 million. Further, that if every woman who had previously had two or more children removed could engage with the programme, potentially, £2.5 billion could be saved over 5 years.

In the continuing climate of austerity measures, it seems unlikely that the funding call from Local Government Association and Association of Directors of Children's Services in England will be acted upon, yet gathering evidence of demonstrable financial benefits of interventions can only bolster arguments. We return to the argument of financial resources in our final comments.

1.5 | Legislation and practice guidance

A key message from the review was that the Children Act 1989 has stood the test of time. Since the implementation of the Act in 1991, there has been a plethora of judicial comments reaffirming the view that children are better looked after in their own families than by local authorities or substitutes. For example, in the judgement of Hedley J in *Re L (Care: Threshold Criteria)* [2007] 1 FLR 1050 he stated, "Basically

it is the tradition of the UK, recognized in law, that children are best brought up within natural families.” In the case of *AB (A Child)* [2018] EWFC 3, the president of the family division at para 24 states, “Local authorities need to think long and hard before embarking upon care proceedings against otherwise unimpeachable parents who may justifiably resent recourse to what they are likely to see as an unnecessarily adversarial and punitive remedy.”

However, there are judgements that contradict this view. In the Court of Appeal, *McFarlane LJ*, in *Re W (A Child)* [2016] EWCA Civ 793, stated that there is “... no legal presumption or right in favour of a child being brought up by their natural family.”

Many of the judicial commentaries in this area relate to information available to the courts at the time initial decisions were made, which have led to criticisms by the judiciary with regard to assessment practices within local authorities. For example, *Re W* was an appeal from the judgement of *Bodey J*, in which an application for adoption was refused because there was a realistic placement with family carers, who had been unaware of the proceedings but who were subsequently identified after the granting of a placement order. Analysis of case law can often conflate the issue of the principles of the Children Act 1989, with the level of analysis and practice of social work. The Care Crisis Review reported that there were strong comments about losing sight of the principles of the Act (p. 26) and that the statutory guidance in England on the assessment of children and families is “silent about the key principles, including working in partnership with families, promoting children's welfare and the provision of support so that children can safely remain at home providing it is consistent with their welfare” (2018, p. 26).

In the options for change in relation to statutory guidance, the review states, “In England in Working Together... procedures are reviewed and amended, so the principles underpinning the legislation, including partnership and co-production with families, are clearly expressed and the process for managing individual cases reflect the messages from research on the effectiveness of relationship based practice.” (2018, p. 26).

As outlined by Holt and Kelly (2018), the number of revisions to working together because the first guidance document was issued in 1991 is currently six, with the latest document brought into effect as of July 2018. Successive revisions have perpetuated hidden constraints to partnership working, and as we have argued, continue to mirror deficit approaches to working with families, “Whilst there is scant reference to working using strengths and holistic approaches the language of Working Together (2015) could be argued to reflect a value for money approach that recognizes the context of scarce resources and limited time for the child” (Holt & Kelly, 2018).

1.6 | The use of section 20 Children Act 1989

In section 3.39 of the Care Crisis Review, issues were raised in relation to the use of section 20 of the Children Act (1989). The review reports that voluntary and agreed alternative care can be helpful but that there have been criticisms as to the use of this order that have led to the rise in care proceedings in some areas. The president of the family division, *Sir James Munby*, set in train the re-examination of a number of cases by local authorities, where children had been accommodated voluntarily but following the judgement, applications for care orders have been made. In the case of *Re N (Children; Adoption: Jurisdiction)* [2015] EWCA Civ 1112, paragraph 157, the president had been critical of the use of section 20. He stated, “Section 20 may, in an appropriate case, have a proper role to play as a short-term measure pending the commencement of care proceedings, but the use of section 20 as a prelude to care proceedings for a period as long as here is wholly unacceptable. It is, in my judgement, and I use the phrase advisedly and deliberately, a misuse by the local authority of its statutory powers.” The president restated the point he raised at paragraph 158 in *Re A (A Child)*, *Darlington Borough Council v M* [2015] EWFC 11, para 100: “There is, I fear, far too much misuse and abuse of section 20 and this can no longer be tolerated.”

Significantly, following the publication of the judgement in this case, the message received by legal and social work professionals was to avoid the use of section 20. In response, a number of commentators, including *Masson (2017)*, have suggested that the use of section 20 has been a source of support for families and is not a tactic to introduce delay for the child. *Masson* describes such judgements as disruptive with the intention to impact on practice. Whilst there are undoubtedly examples of where the use of section 20 has been unacceptable (*Re P (A Child: Use of S.20 CA 1989)* [2014] EWFC 775, *Re N (Children)* [2015] EWFC 37, *Medway Council v A and ors (Learning Disability: Foster Placement)* [2015] EWFC B66, *Gloucestershire County Council v M and C* [2015] EWFC B147, *Gloucestershire County Council v S* [2015] EWFC B149, *Re AS (Unlawful Removal of a Child)* [2015] EWFC B150), there are considerably more examples of where section 20 has been used entirely appropriately and in the child's best interests.

In the options for change, section 3.42 (p. 31) in respect of the use of Section 20, the review states, “That amendments are made in the relevant statutory guidance including Working Together to Safeguard Children ... to include good practice in the use of section 20.”

Whilst it is acknowledged that the revised Working Together to Safeguard Children was enacted only in July 2018 and was in consultation during the Care Crisis Review, it is noted that there is no specific reference to good practice in the use of section 20 of the Children Act 1989.

1.7 | The 26-week rule for the completion of care proceedings

A key message from the review was that following the implementation of the Children and Families Act 2014, there was broad agreement that many cases could and should finish within 26 weeks and that a formal time limit for proceedings had resulted in many cases being completed more quickly. Reported statistics 2012–2018 suggests that this is accurate but not hitting 26 weeks (Cafcass Statistics, 2018). Between 2012 and 2018, case completion in weeks was 48, 37, 30, 30, 29, and 31, respectively. Concerns raised in the review surrounded the inflexibility in applying the timescale and that rising care figures were potentially caused by cases reappearing in the system because decisions had been made too hastily. There was also concern that the rigid approach to timescales was based on case duration being the sole measurement of performance, rather than taking into account factors that are inherently complex in some cases.

In section 4.4 p. 34, options for change the review states, “That the National Family Justice Board ... review the performance management targets for the family justice system and revise the approach to measuring timescales, so that there is a greater focus on understanding the reasons for extensions whilst avoiding unnecessary drift and delay, and greater attention to longer term outcomes, such as whether children come back into proceedings.”

Once again, whilst this is laudable, there is research that has questioned the 26-week rule in terms of cutting off opportunities for partnership working with parents at the very last opportunity to demonstrate capacity and change (Holt & Kelly, 2016). And whilst the legislation might have been primarily aimed at reducing the delay for children once proceedings have been issued, it was undoubtedly also aimed at reducing court costs. If there has been a demonstration that timescales can be reduced it is hard to envisage a situation where the performance target and conditions for flexibility would change significantly.

2 | CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The Care Crisis Review is a thorough and well-informed document that reports considerable strengths with innovative approaches and new developments at all levels of the family justice system working with families. The review has reported that there are sound systems in place to support families, nevertheless with clear areas for improvement: as the Chair of the Review commented,

“Dealing with the crisis is complex—inevitably so, because children and families live increasingly complex lives. But making the difference cannot be just about constant re-structures, or ever-changing systems—the fundamental basis of our child welfare approach is encouragingly sound. The way forward has to be about working with complexity to offer hope. Offering an inclusive approach to family decision making so that families are helped to better understand the concerns about a child’s welfare and then helped to coordinate and propose a safe response to those

concerns from within their own, usually extensive, family and friends network. It’s about moving away from an over reliance on the language of assessment and intervention and more towards understanding and helping. It’s about being less adversarial, risk averse and harsh and much more collaborative and kind.”

At the same time the Care Crisis Review was reported the Children’s Commissioner for England published a report by the Institute for Fiscal Studies stating that the current spending on Children’s Social Care is unsustainable. This was not to suggest that the whole budget was inappropriate, although this is our point, rather that the budget has been skewed in the direction of statutory support for children and families who are in crisis at the expense of all vulnerable children who should benefit from early help and interventions at the same time as those in crisis.

Within children’s social care the Commissioner’s report outlines that in the 2000’s spending per head had doubled from about £430–860 per child. In 2000 and 2001, total spending on children’s services was approximately £4.8 billion, to a high point of £9.7 billion in 2009 and 2010. Between that time and 2017 and 2018, it is reported spending has fallen in real terms by 11%, and if current cuts were to continue, the total fall in spending over the last 10 years would represent 14% in real terms. The rhetoric of the increase in total spending in the 2000’s and the balancing of spending on statutory services for children is evident, what remains is a balance sheet where in real terms spending on all children’s support services will decrease.

2.1 | The Care Crisis Review comments: (2018, p. 5)

“The review has achieved its aim of developing a greater understanding across the sector about the factors contributing to the crisis and of involving a wide range of those involved in the system in identifying and developing options for change. The next stage is much more important. For all of us to own the problem, reflect on messages from the Review, and consider the commitments we can make to safely tackle the crisis and improve the experiences of children, families, and practitioners.”

Whilst the legislative framework might be largely effective and the system generally works well, there is insufficient funding and resources to meet the needs of children and their families when they seek help, regardless of whether this is at an early stage or when they are in crisis and most in need of care and protection.

ORCID

Kim Holt <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3407-8300>

REFERENCES

- Broadhurst, K., Alrouh, B., Mason, C., Yeend, E., Kershaw, S., Shaw, M., and Harwin, J. (2016) Women and infants in care proceedings in England: New insights from research on recurrent care proceedings. Repository.tavistockandportman.ac.uk
- Bunting, L., McCartan, C., McGhee, J., Bywaters, P., Daniel, B., Featherstone, B., & Slater, T. (2018). Trends in child protection across the UK—a comparative analysis. *British Journal of Social Work*, 48(5, July 2018), 1154–1175. First published online 17 October 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx102>
- Bywaters, P., Brady, G., Bunting, L., Daniel, B., Featherstone, B., Jones, C., ... Webb, C. (2018). Inequalities in English child protection practice under austerity: A universal challenge? *Child & Family Social Work*, 23(1, Feb 2018), 53–61. First published online 7 July 2017 <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12383>
- Cafcass Statistics accessed at <http://wofj.ccfcass.gov.uk> at July 2018
- Care Crisis Review, Care crisis review—Options for change (2018). London, Nuffield Foundation, Family Rights Group.
- Davidson, G., Bunting, L., Bywaters, P., Featherstone, B., & McCartan, C. (2017). Child welfare as justice: Why are we not effectively addressing inequalities? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 47(6), 1641–1651. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx094>
- Department for Education (2017). *Children looked after in England (including adoption) year ending March 2017*. London: DfE; SFR50/2017.
- Department for Education (2018). Working together to safeguard children —A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (July) London.
- Department for Education and Skills (2004). *Every child matters: Change for children*. London: DfES.
- Featherstone, B., White, S., & Morris, K. (2014). *Re-imagining child protection: Towards humane social work with families*. Policy Press. ISBN: 9781447308010.
- Forrester, D., Lynch, A., Bostock, L., Newlands, F., Preston, B., & Cary, A. (2017). Family safeguarding Hertfordshire. DfE. Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 55.
- Harwin, J. (2014). *Changing lifestyles, keeping children safe: An evaluation of the first Family Drug And Alcohol Court (FDAC) in care proceedings*. London: Nuffield Foundation.
- Harwin, J. E., Alrouh, B., Broadhurst, K. E., McQuarrie, T. J., Golding, L. F., & Ryan, M. (2018). Child and parent outcomes in the London Family Drug And Alcohol Court five years on: Building on international evidence. *International Journal of Law Policy and the Family*, 32(2), 140–169. <https://doi.org/10.1093/lawfam/ebv006>
- Harwin, J. E., Broadhurst, K., Kershaw, S., Shaw, M., Alrouh, B., & Masson, C. (2014). Recurrent care proceedings; Part 2: Young motherhood and the role of the court. *Family Law*, 44(10), 1439–1443.
- Holt, K., & Kelly, N. (2016). Why Parents Matter: exploring the hegemonic concern with the timetable for the child. *Child and Family Social Work*, 21(2), 156–165.
- Holt, K., & Kelly, N. (2018). Limits to Partnership Working: developing relationship based approaches with children and their families. *Journal of Social Welfare and Family Law*, 40(2), 147–163.
- Laming Report (2003). *The Victoria Climbié inquiry: Report of the inquiry by Lord Laming (cm. 5730)*, Stationery office. London.
- Lushey, C., Hyde Dryden, G., Holmes, L., & Blackmore, J. (2017) No wrong door—An example of good practice with adolescents. Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 51.
- Mason, P., Ferguson, H., Morris, K., Munton, T., & Sen, R. (2017). Leeds Family Valued. Evaluation Report. Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 4.
- Masson, J. (2017). Disruptive judgments. *Child and Family Law Quarterly*, 29, 401–422.
- McCracken, K., Priest, S., FitzSimons, A., Bracewell, K., Torchia, K., Parry, W., & Stanley, N. (2017). Evaluation of pause research report. Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 49.
- McGhee, J., Bunting, L., McCartan, C., Elliott, M., Bywaters, P., & Featherstone, B. (2018). Looking after children in the UK—Convergence or divergence? *The British Journal of Social Work*, 48(5, July 2018), 1176–1198. First published online 17 October 2017. <https://doi.org/10.1093/bjsw/bcx103>
- Munby, J. (2016). 15th View from the Presidents's Chambers: Care cases: Looming crisis. *Family Law*, 1227.
- Munro, E. (2010). *The Munro review of child protection, part one: A system's analysis*. London: Department for Education.
- Munro, E. (2011a). *The Munro review of child protection: Interim report. The child's journey*. London: Department for Education.
- Munro, E. (2011b). *The Munro review of child protection: Final report. A child-centred system (Cm. 8062)*. London: Department for Education.
- Parton, N. (2014). *The politics of child protection: Contemporary developments and future directions*. Basingstoke: Palgrave/Macmillan.
- Parton, N., & Williams, S. (2017). The contemporary refocusing of children's services in England. *Journal of Children's Services*, 12(2/3), 85–96. ISSN 17466660. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCS-03-2017-0008>
- Roberts, E., Crowther, T., Brown, A., & Kerr, J. (2017). Family drug and alcohol court national unit: Independent evaluation. Research report. Children's Social Care Innovation Programme Evaluation Report 12.
- Rodger, J., Woolger, A., Cutmore, M., & Wilkinson, L. (2017) Creating strong communities in North East Lincolnshire. Evaluation Department for Education (DFE) York Consulting LLP, corp creators. (2017) report, July 2017.
- Ruch, G. (2005). Relationship-based practice and reflective practice: Holistic approaches to contemporary child care social work'. (2005. *Child & Family Social Work*, 10, 111–123. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1365-2206.2005.00359.x>
- Ruch, G. (2010). *Relationship-based social work*. London: Jessica Kingsley.

How to cite this article: Holt K, Kelly N. Care in crisis—Is there a solution? Reflections on the Care Crisis Review 2018. *Child & Family Social Work*. 2019;1–7. <https://doi.org/10.1111/cfs.12644>